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LATIN AMERICA REVIEW

14 September 1978

CONTENTS

Cuba and the Nonaligned Movement. 1

Cuba is concerned about its image in the Nonaligned Movement and can be influenced to some extent by pressure from that quarter, but this is not likely to produce policy changes on issues of real importance to the Cuban leadership.

Colombia: Stringent Security Laws Passed 4

The potential for human rights abuses raised by a tough new statute designed to control serious crime and terrorism problems does not seem to concern most Colombians, who apparently favor President Turbay's firm stand.

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SECRET

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Cuba and the Nonaligned Movement

Cuba is concerned about its image in the Nonaligned Movement, which it views as an important arena for playing a significant international role. It may also view the movement as useful from time to time so that it can demonstrate independence from the USSR. The Nonaligned can thus help moderate Cuban actions on issues that Havana does not perceive to be matters of principle. As a general rule, however, the more important the issue, the less likely such pressure can produce meaningful policy changes in Havana.

The main characteristics of Cuban foreign policy--boldness and aggressiveness--are largely a reflection of Fidel Castro's personality, and as such they constitute a fundamental feature of his regime. At the same time, however, the Castro government is not entirely impervious to Third World diplomatic pressure aimed at moderating some of these bold and aggressive initiatives. But Third World pressure has generally been effective only when:

- It has been exerted through bilateral as opposed to multilateral channels.
- It has been exerted by governments on the far left of the political spectrum.

In general, the Cuban leadership wants to maintain a positive image in multilateral bodies such as the Organization of African Unity and the Nonaligned Movement. It realizes, however, that its activist policy is bound to cause conflicts, and it counts on propaganda and diplomatic skill to reduce unfavorable reactions. This tactic is especially effective with the OAU and NAM, given their inherent reluctance to act decisively on divisive issues. Although the Cubans are acutely sensitive to criticism from virtually any quarter, they

14 September 1978

SECRET

realize that criticism by one or even several delegations at an international conclave seldom translates into important concrete measures.

On the other hand, bilateral diplomatic pressure from radical governments is more difficult for Havana to deflect. The Cubans see these governments as potential allies to be cultivated. To gain or maintain influence with them, Cuba cannot ignore or reject their representations as it would those of a rightist government. The radicals' ability to influence Cuban foreign policy has little to do with their affiliation with regional or global organizations; Havana deals with them directly and tries to accommodate their concerns.

The Limits of Diplomatic Pressure

If Cuban policy is not impervious to pressure, neither is it readily responsive--even to radical allies. In the case of Eritrea, for example, pressure from four radical Arab states--Iraq, Syria, Libya, and Algeria--helped convince Havana of the high cost of allowing Cuban combat units to take part in the Ethiopian Government's suppression of the Eritrean guerrillas. But even this pressure was only a contributing factor--not a determining one--in the Cuban decision to avoid injecting Cuban units into the struggle. Much more important was the fact that Ethiopia's antiguerrilla campaign was effective enough to obviate the need for Cuban units, so that Havana was not forced to decide between accommodating the radical Arabs or rescuing Mengistu's revolution. Moreover, Moscow was also advising Havana to play it cool in Eritrea.

Nevertheless, Havana apparently undertook damage-control measures toward the Arabs earlier this summer when it looked like a Cuban-Eritrean confrontation might be required to save Mengistu from military disaster. In the name of "proletarian internationalism," Cuba sent some 650 medical personnel to Libya and another 378 to Iraq to provide public health service in rural areas. (There may not be a direct cause-and-effect relationship here; other factors beyond a desire to buy off Libya and Iraq undoubtedly contributed to the Cuban decision to send the technicians.)

14 September 1978

SECRET

The Question of a Cuban Pullout

We remain uncertain whether Cuba is reducing the level of its troops in Ethiopia or Angola, but if a reduction is under way, we believe it is not motivated by foreign pressure but rather by Havana's belief that existing political and military conditions permit it. The Cubans, of course, would not hesitate to use the news of such a withdrawal to good advantage, especially to quiet fears in those capitals that have expressed concern about Cuba's intentions. But the Castro regime would not withdraw troops if this would compromise the stability of either the Mengistu or Neto governments, international pressure notwithstanding. The Cubans are ready, if necessary, to take their diplomatic lumps and go it alone.

The Cubans recognize that damage can be done to their cause by other countries acting in international forums. Havana no doubt was concerned during the July OAU meeting in Khartoum when Nigeria gently chided Cuba for its military presence in Africa. It was at least embarrassed at the nonaligned foreign ministers' meeting in Belgrade later that month, when a number of countries challenged Cuba's nonaligned status and its right to host the nonaligned summit next year. The Castro regime is confident, however, that it can keep such damage within manageable limits.

A long record--dating back to Havana's "export of revolution" in the 1960s--shows that diplomatic pressure alone even from Third World countries, has not deterred the Castro regime once the leadership has decided that a particular course is necessary to an important foreign policy goal. We do not expect to see this pattern change in the foreseeable future.

25X1

14 September 1978

Colombia: Stringent Security Laws Passed

Last week the government of recently elected President Turbay promulgated a tough new statute designed to control Colombia's serious problems of common crime, terrorism, and political subversion. The new measures will not only provide stiffer prison sentences for specific crimes such as kidnaping, but will also regulate the broadcasting of radio and television communications "relative to public order." According to government spokesmen, the severe penalties do not lessen Colombia's dedication to the principles of human rights and will not infringe on the civil rights of citizens.

Most Colombians do not seem to be concerned by the implications or potential abuses of such a security law. Indeed, many Colombians apparently find Turbay's strong, decisive actions to be a welcome contrast to what they regarded as the weakness and indecision of the Lopez administration--particularly during its final months in power. Their initial enthusiastic support for the statute also stems from a belief that it will quickly restore public peace and, as a result, encourage investment and promote economic growth.

Not everyone, however, supports Turbay's security package. One Bogota bar association plans to challenge the new statute in the Supreme Court because of its ambiguous wording and other "legal" defects. In addition, some union leaders have expressed concern that the decree will be used to impede organized labor's ability to voice its needs and grievances through strikes and public protests.

We have no evidence that Turbay intends to use the security statute for repressive purposes. The new law appears to be a logical--and badly needed--first step toward reducing the havoc and fear wrought by criminals, terrorists, and insurgents in Colombia.

During the four years of the Lopez administration, for example, there were 324 reported kidnappings in Colombia with ransom payments totaling \$158 million.

14 September 1978

SECRET

During the same period, the various guerrilla organizations engaged in increasingly bold urban operations, while the nation's illegal drug trade expanded into a \$1-billion-a-year industry.

Even as the new law was being unveiled, a group of assassins made a daylight entry into the home of a former Minister of Government, Rafael Pardo, and murdered him. Bogota officials believe the attack was carried out by members of an urban guerrilla gang and may be related to Pardo's role in suppressing last September's general strike. The assassination may also be an act in defiance of the security statute and could be the first in a series of reprisals against Turbay's new "get tough" policy.

In order to fulfill his campaign promises, Turbay will have to tackle each of Colombia's many crime problems separately and systematically. In the process, he may well have to implement even more stringent security measures in order to restore and preserve the democracy that some Colombians believe has been strained to the breaking point in recent years.

25X1

14 September 1978

SECRET



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Next 2 Page(s) In Document Exempt

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